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Placemaking in Boystown: A Story of Perspective and Collaboration

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Placemaking in Boystown: A Story of Perspective and Collaboration

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Abstract

Placemaking in Boystown: A Story of Perspective and Collaboration

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

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Minorities must be intentional in seeking out and making spaces for their communities in the cities they live. Depending on the political and social cultures influencing their leaders and peers, they will find varying degrees of ease or difficulty in finding and creating spaces relevant to their minority community. I sought to find out which factors influence a minority community's ability to successfully produce space in their city. More specifically, I wanted to see what influence cities have in that development process.

I chose Chicago's gay neighborhood as a case site after learning about former Mayor Richard M. Daley's Neighborhoods Alive program at an American Planning Association National Conference. Under the Mayor's initiative, several minority groups in Chicago received funding for planning and building streetscapes that reflected their communities. Chicago's gay neighborhood, Boystown, was among the communities that received funding and I was intrigued by Chicago's direct role in minority community placemaking. In addition to literature reviews on Boystown's history and theories on space creation, I visited Chicago for a week in August 2018 and while there I interviewed 12 leaders and professionals connected to Boystown.

I found that gay space creation in Chicago grew exponentially once the City ended discriminatory treatment of the community. Once those city inflicted burdens were removed, minimal direct action from the City was necessary for gay space creation to flourish. Before sodomy laws were removed in 1961, and even some time after, regular raids on businesses and arrests of patrons made space occupation difficult and contributed to the transient nature of gay spaces before the late 20th century. When discriminatory laws were removed and as harassment waned, gay spaces were able to develop in ways not previously possible. Ownership of buildings and homes and a growing openly gay community also changed the way gay spaces formed compared to Chicago's past. Outside of the streetscape investments, Chicago has moved into a supportive role, allowing the community to determine its own future in part as a means to promote its business district as an amenity and tourist destination.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I approached the topic of Boystown and social and physical placemaking in the hope of discovering how minority groups can create vibrant community and business centers in their cities. I was also curious as to why some minority groups, like the Chinese, seemed to more easily establish neighborhoods recognized by their city while other minority groups may struggle to do so. I wanted to see if there were lessons to be learned from Boystown that could inform other minority groups who wished to develop their own spaces in a similar way.

Before visiting Boystown I read Amin Ghaziani's *There Goes the Gayborhood* (2016) to gain a contemporary perceptive on gay space creation and the future of gay neighborhoods (2016). Ghaziani's work was particularly relevant to me because he focused his research on Boystown. In many ways, his account of Boystown and the gay history and culture of Chicago were my first deep exposure to these topics. Ghaziani quotes many of the same community leaders I interviewed or mention in this paper, but he also interviewed citizens and sought to gain their perspective on the changing gay neighborhoods, gay culture, and political climate. He focuses on the determination and needs of the community members and demonstrates how the future of gay neighborhoods will be determined by their evolving trends (Ghaziani, 2016, p. 257).

After looking into Boystown as a case study for minority place making, I began asking myself new questions about what power dynamics and social capital are needed to claim space in a city. This paper will be a reflection on what I learned about the development of Boystown and its possible future, drawing on Zukin's space theory and Amin Ghaziani's community theory to better understand why Boystown has developed the way it has and its potential future. I conclude

that neither theory is sufficient in explaining the history of Boystown or its future, despite each highlighting important factors surrounding community development.

Accepting Zukin's premise that space is a manifestation of power, I considered what level of integration and respect must be offered to or claimed by a minority group to exert itself in the physical fabric of the city. Likewise, what does is say about the power dynamics of the minority group if it's relegated to expressing its physical power within the confines of a neighborhood and rarely, if ever, outside of it? As the gay community begins to enjoy new social standing in the United States, gay space creation will grow not only within neighborhoods understood to have a strong gay community presence, but in neighborhoods around a city. After asking community leaders about the future of Boystown, there was a frequent sentiment that Boystown will continue to be important, but future efforts should acknowledge that gay people live all over the city and future productions of space should represent that fact (Hunt, 2018; Rodriguez, 2018). The social and political movements that created Boystown have evolved and it's likely the gay community's new social position will manifest in productions of space at scales yet seen.

I start this paper by examining the theory of Sharon Zukin on the relation of power with the production of space. I will also review Amin Ghaziani's theory on community determined space production in the conclusion. Following a review on Zukin's theory, I examine gay space production broadly and then more specifically in Boystown. I look at the development of different types of space production by examining them in three dimensions: visual manifestations, physical spaces, and organizational development and integration. Lastly, I look at how the community leaders I spoke to imagine the future of gay neighborhoods, how that relates to new power dynamics, and what that could mean for the future production of gay spaces.

Figure 1: Boystown, in SE quarter of Lakeview. Source: Best Chicago Properties, available at https://www.bestchicagoproperties.com/neighborhoods/

Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood became known as the City's epicenter of gay life by the early 1980s (Fig. 1). A former weekly news column titled 'Boys Town' is rumored to be the

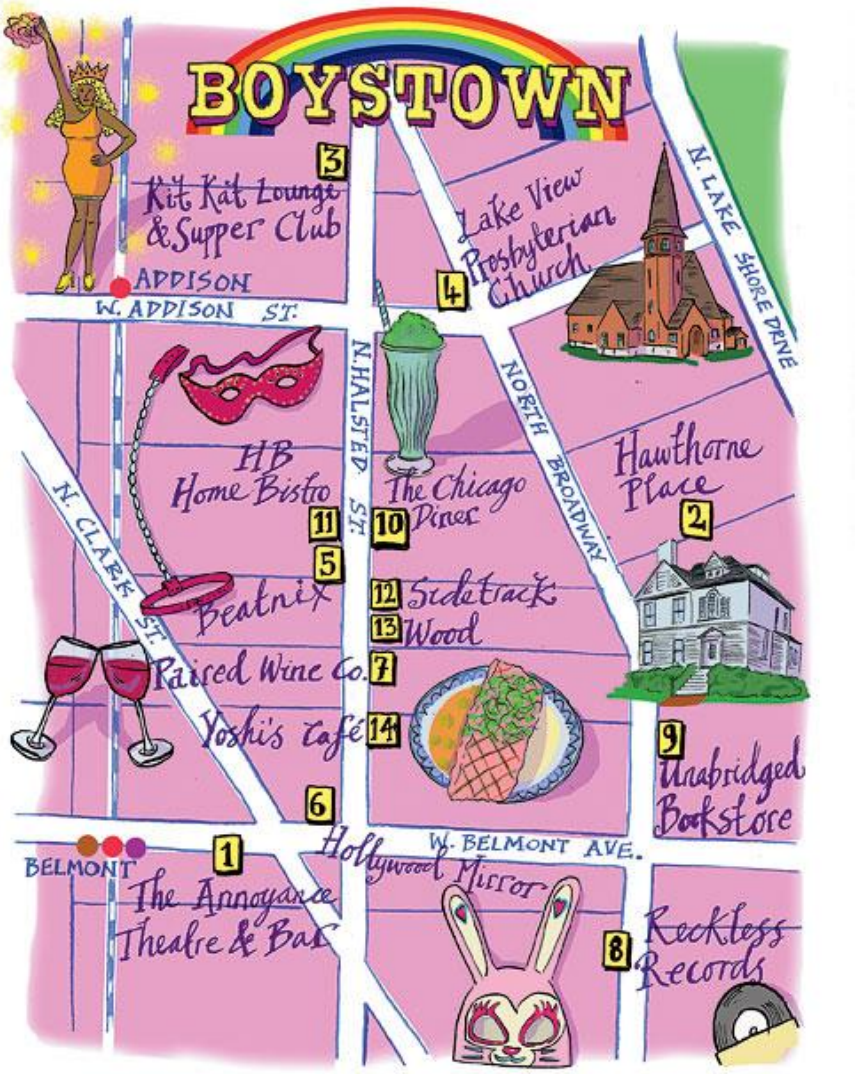

Figure 2: Illustrated map of Boystown, the gay neighborhood within Lakeview. Source: Michael A. Hill, available at https://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/October-

origins of Lakeview's gay neighborhood nickname, Boystown (wbez, n.d.). The nickname is still used today and continues to be legitimized through its use in maps, articles, and tourist publications. Boystown is roughly defined as the triangle area north of West Belmont Avenue, east of North Halstead Street, and west of North Broadway (Fig. 2). A few gay bars opened on those streets in the early 80s, and for the first time in Chicago's history, there were multiple gay bars across the street from each other. Due to persecution and frequent raids, bars

catering to the gay community had not previously been able to keep most establishments open longer than a few years (wbez, n.d.).

Changes at every level of government made the creation of Boystown possible. In 1961, about two decades before Lakeview would be known for Boystown, Illinois became the first U.S. state to revoke its sodomy laws ("The Gay Rights Movement In Illinois," 2010). After that historic victory, cultural perceptions changed slowly, but over time new alliances were created between the gay community and the government. Bernie Hansen, the Alderman of the 44th Ward between 1983 and 2001, worked closely with many of the gay business owners to help them get loans and set-up their businesses in the neighborhood (Rodriguez, 2018). The cluster of gay owned businesses, particularly the bars, created new social and political networks that had previously not been possible.

The political and social environment in which Boystown was forming was hostile to gays, but a new trend toward activism and integration fueled by the AIDS epidemic was taking hold in the 1980s. Most people kept their sexual identities secret due to prejudice, which could lead to loss of work or being ostracized from one's family. When bars like Sidetrack began to open, their owners and patrons were still facing many of the same challenges of previous generations, including being subject to raids and risking being targeted for a hate crime (wbez, n.d.). Many people still visited Boystown to connect with others in their community. The bars that were open during the early years of the AIDS epidemic took on new importance in the community as third-spaces where gays learned about the disease and activists organized.

Figure 3: Rainbow Pylon. Source: Author

In 1997, Boystown became the first neighborhood in the world to be officially designated as a gay neighborhood by a municipality (Johnson, 1997). The following year, rainbow pylons were installed along North Halsted Street to commemorate the gay community in the neighborhood (Fig. 3). Boystown was among the first Chicago neighborhoods to receive streetscape improvements under Mayor Daley's Neighborhoods Alive initiative (Emanuel, n.d.). Beyond the neighborhood's businesses and streetscape, Boystown is also defined by its events,

including the Pride Parade and the Northalsted Market Day festival, which draw visitors from around the world.

Boystown has continued to evolve over the decades. Many businesses in the Northalsted Special Service Area (SSA) are queer owned and the neighborhood is home to Center on Halsted. Center on Halsted is a LGBT community center that opened in 2007 and grew out of a previous institution known as Horizons Community Services (Baim, 2008, p. 102). One of the Center's most recent capital projects was converting the historic police station next to the Center into affordable gay affirming senior housing. The streetscape around Boystown also continues to evolve, most notably the changes made by the Legacy Walk Project which reimagined the pylons as an outdoor museum. Every year since 2012, plaques have been added to the pylons showcasing the accomplishments of honorable gay persons throughout history and from around the world ("History," n.d.).

Boystown is a manifestation of the desires of a community who have demanded liberation from previous prejudice actions and beliefs held against them. The few blocks of Lakeview that became Boystown are a physical representation of those growing social and political movements. Businesses, events, and symbolic imagery came together to delineate a sphere of influence in Lakeview. As Sharon Zukin, argues, the production of space is tied closely with power (1995). How buildings take shape and the institutions they house are all expressions of those who had the power to make such decisions. In some cases, these displays of power are meant to be consumed. For example, museums are created to exert awe from passersby who see the grandness of the building while also inviting them to enter and consume the story the museum wishes to tell (Zukin, 1995, p. 14). Boystown is one of the first examples of a gay community producing their own space and showcasing their power to one another and

their city at large. This expression of power was soon followed by the City using its influence on the production of space to construct a new narrative about itself and its relationship with the gay community.

Visiting Boystown for the first time in 2018, I entered a neighborhood that already had 30-40 years of business and government initiatives establishing it as the gay center of Chicago. The pylons had already been built, Sidetrack had been open for over 35 years, and the Center on Halsted had recently opened Chicago's first gay affirming senior housing. The neighborhood already had a well-established identity. While I was there, I interviewed 12 individuals each from different institutions who worked directly with the neighborhood or the gay community of Chicago. It was through their collective experiences that I was able to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the gay community and the City in space production.

I've chosen to use the term 'gay' in this paper to describe a neighborhood or space that has been formed by or for anyone in the LGBT community. Historic and current use of gay have been used to refer both to gay men and the larger LGBTQ+ community. While terms like LGBT or queer have been adopted more frequently in recent times as more inclusive terms, the use of the term 'gay neighborhood' is still widely used, usually with the intention of its inclusive meaning. For these reasons and for consistency, I have chosen to use the term gay when I am referring to LGBT events and spaces.

Chapter 2: A Perspective on City Involvement in Placemaking

Sharon Zukin's *Culture of Cites* (1995) argues that cities produce cultural space to meet the interests and needs of business elites. Zukin tends to see a city's relationship with cultural production as negative since it's often driven by economics, but when a city's motivations are altruistic, she suggests their involvement in cultural production may benefit a minority community. In this chapter, I will explore the reasons Zukin gives for why cities engage in cultural production, illustrate how cities use their power to shape the imagery of these spaces, and give examples of how this is applicable to Boystown in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago.

Zukin sees symbolism as an important factor of cultural production. Symbolism is realized both by the production of a space and how the space is managed. The symbolic cues and the use of the space will signal to the public who is welcome and who is not. Zukin believes that since the 1970s, American society has placed a "greater emphasis on [the] visualization" of cultural consumption (Zukin, 1995, p. 10). Zukin believed the reasons for this new emphasis on visualizing culture was due to businesses and talent moving out of the cities to the suburbs and because the economy was moving away from manufacturing and becoming increasingly speculative (Zukin, 1995, p. 11).With increased growth in the service-based economy, cities were reimagining their neighborhoods as place to be experienced and consumed. If American cities have come to rely more on symbolism to attract talent back to their downtowns and they are now attempting to serve the needs of a service-based economy, then Zukin believes there are three assumptions that can be made regarding culture and cites: cities are using culture as an economic base, the capitalization of culture spills over into the privatization and militarization of public space, and the power of culture is related to the aesthetics of fear (Zukin, 1995, p. 11).

When talent and businesses were choosing to locate outside of the city, cities had to make themselves stand out from the suburbs. Suburbs were where people went to live the American dream with the promise of security and safety. To compete with this, cities began to emphasize their ability to offer “aesthetic diversity” (Zukin, 1995, p. 12) by creating the largest museums and the largest parks and waterfronts. By developing these new cultural institutions and grand public spaces they were also erecting new symbols of their economic success (Zukin, 1995, p. 12).

Zukin's theory on the city and cultural space production was written in 1995, and she believed that the cultural zeitgeist of the time was defined by a change from local to global images, public to private institutions, and ethnically and racially homogeneous to diverse communities (1995, p. 24). Today, many of those things are still true and apply to the story of Boystown. Cities continue to be places where one can find global business and culture. It’s also still true that cities try to brand themselves within a global market. The transition from public to private institutions has also grown. Zukin saw the beginnings of Business Improvement Districts (BID) which have since been established in several major cities across the United States. While American cities still attract people from around the U.S. and the world, their diversity is being challenged with an influx of wealthier and whiter residents. These three changes Zukin saw in cultural production can be seen within the development of Boystown. You can find increasing use of the rainbow in street art and signage, which was becoming a new global image for the gay communities; Boystown developed its own Special Service Area (SSA) which functions like a BID; and the neighborhood was recognized as Chicago’s gay cultural center as part of a campaign driven by the Mayor’s office to highlight the ethnic and cultural diversity of Chicago.

When a large corporation builds its headquarters in a city the people it attracts will have an effect on the cultural demands placed on the city. To accommodate a highly skilled and diverse workforce needed for modern corporations, there must be a variety of cultural services that accommodate their needs and interests. Because corporations can choose where they will invest in future infrastructure, this incentivizes cities to offer services that will attract new businesses and retain the ones they do have. Spaces and services will be created that help the wealthy, the young, or the foreign connect with others like themselves and with others they aspire to meet. Zukin notes that these considerations include "facilitate(ing) communication among them across gender and sexual persuasions" (Zukin, 1995, p. 13). Zukin was able to see a future that was in the infancy of being realized when *The Culture of Cities* was published in 1995. Zukin recognized that sexual orientation would be a factor cities would consider in attracting the best talent and corporations. In 1997, just two years after Zukin's publication, Chicago would be the first municipality in the world to officially recognize its gay neighborhood.

A contemporary example of how this can play out was Amazon's search for a new city to be home to its second headquarters, known as HQ2. Amazon wanted to see what cities would offer them in return for building their headquarters in their municipalities. Included in Amazon's request for proposals (RFP) was a list of criteria that would be used to guide Amazon's final decision. One of the eight "key preferences and decision drivers" listed in Amazon's RFP was "Cultural Community Fit," which was interpreted, among other things, to mean that the city and state they moved to should have gay protection laws (Amazon, n.d.). This left some cities like Austin at a disadvantage because despite having progressive local politics, a lack of discrimination protection at the state level could have been held against them. Conversations

around the need for gay rights were raised in several cities and states who were able to point directly to Amazon as an example of how cultural diversity and inclusion affects the decisions of where corporations choose to build in hopes of attracting the best talent ("Dallas, Austin don't deserve Amazon HQ2 because Texas has no LGBT protections, campaign says," 2018).

Through the lens of Zukin's theory, the City of Chicago supported the cultural branding of Boystown as a way of distinguishing itself from the suburbs and to attract businesses and talent. That would suggest that Mayor Daley's Neighborhoods Alive project was more motivated by a symbolic cultural branding of the city than a motivation to create great spaces for the people living in these diverse neighborhoods. The decision to brand part of Lakeview as the cultural center of gay life in Chicago was not arbitrary: it was strategic. There was never a time that the majority of Boystown residents were gay, which came up as a point of contention in community debates regarding the streetscape designs. Some non-gay residents felt that placing rainbow pylons on Halsted didn't accurately represent them or the diverse community. Even some gay residents were hesitant because they were worried it would draw too much attention to them during a time when hate crime was more prevalent ("The history of boystown's rainbow pylons," n.d.). In the end, the pylons were built and have become an iconic addition to the neighborhood. Boystown was unique at the time, but it was not the only culturally or historically significant gay space in Chicago.

Cities influence what is remembered from the past when they choose what they preserve and how they preserve it. A city might preserve an entire neighborhood, a single building, or just an element of a building. Those choices regarding how history is preserved and presented is linked to the economic and cultural value placed upon those spaces (Zukin, 1995, p. 17). A city can capitalize on the value created through the stories it chooses to tell about its past. These

value judgments can be an extension of the links between the tourist economy and the corporate economy. Corporations and the people they attract prefer to live in dynamic cities with diverse histories and a variety of cultural narratives. Boystown is an example of a cultural narrative being told in Chicago. The neighborhood puts Chicago on the map for some tourists from around the world seeking to enjoy Boystown's amenities and events. Having such a neighborhood can be appealing to queer people, especially those from rural areas, who may choose to move to a particular city because it offers such a cultural amenity.

Sometimes, spaces are made ready for "tourists and cultural consumers" by removing the original inhabitants and reprogramming the space to make it attractive and safe for cultural consumption (Zukin, 1995, p. 19). Evidence of this can be found in many reinvestment projects in cultural minority spaces. Too frequently, public and private investment in a space is not driven by the desire to improve the quality and safety of an area for existing residents or patrons. Instead the focus is on making the space safe and consumable to new more affluent people. Zukin gives the example of Santa Fe's art scene as a form of cultural appropriation through the occupation of a space and market (1995, p. 20). In Santa Fe, instead of local residents of color making art and selling it to residents, it was new white artists who were inspired by the local art and made a new approachable product and space for mass cultural consumption.

The decision some cities have made to place some parks under private management was in part a reaction to rampant homelessness, particularity of the mentally ill, during the 70s (Zukin, 1995, p. 27). The principle behind private park management, as first seen in New York City's Bryant Park, was to attract more middle-to-upper class visitors to the park. The presence of those kind of people and the patrol of private security would eventually displace the unwanted occupants. Bryant Park's private management was successful at attracting new visitors and its

success helped spur the growth of BIDs in the United States (Zukin, 1995, p. 29). In Chicago, there are Special Service Areas (SSA) which serve the same purpose as a BID. Zukin proposes we should be concerned about BIDs creating a "Disney World in the streets" (Zukin, 1995, p. 34). In such a future, each city would have its own style of cultural consumption, and through BIDs neighborhoods would reflect a commercial centric culture. BIDs would address the fears people have of urban spaces through the tools of gentrification, historic preservation, and cultural strategies.

Zukin does offer a positive example of cities incorporating new symbols into their city in a way that is inclusive instead of opportunistic. She cites New York City's Brooklyn Pan-Caribbean Carnival Parade on Labor Day as a positive use of space in a city that originally didn't represent that culture (1995, p. 20). Boystown, on the other hand, is a complicated mix of the positive and opportunistic sides of cultural production in a city. The City of Chicago sought to represent gay space in the city as part of larger cultural diversity campaign that was likely driven by motivations of cultural consumption. However, the gay rights movement cannot be ignored as a powerful influence in demanding that a city, state, and nation incorporate gay culture into the fabric of its societies. Much like the Pan-Caribbean residents gathered to redefine a space in Brooklyn for themselves, gay residents and owners banded together to create spaces that represent them in the City of Chicago.

Understanding that symbolism is not one-sided, Zukin believes that the production of symbols are made for two reasons: they function as a currency for commercial exchange and they form a language of social identity (1995, p. 24). She further suggests that each symbol is "one-part corporate image selling and two-parts claim to group identity" (1995, p. 46). Those in power use the built environment to symbolize who is part of their accepted circle and who is not.

Zukin believes this is motivated by two types of fear: fear of being indistinguishable from other groups and a fear of crime, which then uses culture production as a "crucial weapon in reasserting order" (1995, p. 46).

Zukin also points out that culture can be used to soften the blow of redevelopment and gentrification. Culture can be used to draw new development just as much as it can be used to mask it. For example, cities can use art as a tool to reinforce their city's uniqueness and its power, and in so doing, differentiating itself from the mundane suburbs and offering business elites a way to consume local culture (Zukin, 1995, p. 23). By doing so, however, cities may displace the locals and even the people whose cultures that art is meant to represent. Creating cultural spaces that are approachable to a wealthier white-collar person may also hide the realities of that culture in the rest of the city. The existence of Boystown, a great asset for locals, transplants, and tourists, can also mask the fact that there are other needs or subgroups of the gay community being underserved in Chicago.

For much of Chicago's history, gay people were not a part of the culture in power and were frequently excluded and attacked. They were arrested and harassed for being openly gay or for gathering with other gay persons. In the late 20th century that started to change, and it became increasingly advantageous socially, politically, and economically to be acceptable of gay subcultures. In 2019, there are more openly gay politicians than at any other time in American history (Caron, 2018). Gay culture has begun to move from a subculture excluded from positions of power to an increasingly influential subculture in seats of power. As such, gay cultural production is likely to change to reflect this evolving relationship to power. Cities will now be looking for ways to attract gay talent that expects more from the cities they live in. Gay talent

and the companies that hope to attract them will likely choose cities that offer gay cultural spaces in more inclusive and expansive ways than expected in the past.

Chapter 3: Context for Contemporary Gay Space Creation

This chapter focuses on space creation in three gay neighborhoods, including The Castro in San Francisco, Boystown in Chicago, and Greenwich Village in New York City. I will explore visual space creation by looking at the symbology that has come out of the gay rights movements, including the rainbow flag and silence = death poster. I'll look at a few examples of gay occupation of space, including Pride events and the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. I also look at examples of organizational space creation. This chapter is far from a comprehensive look into gay history. Instead, this chapter highlights significant trends and events in recent gay history that tell a story of how a marginalized group sought and gained power and visibility in American cities. It also lays the framework for what might come next in the evolution of gay space production in America.

Before The Castro was a gay neighborhood, it was a Scandinavian and then an Irish neighborhood ("History of the Castro/Upper Market," 2014). For a time, the neighborhood was called "Little Scandinavia" and had several Scandinavian businesses and institutions including town halls, churches, and bakeries. The Irish called the neighborhood "Holy Redeemer" because of the prominent cathedral which many of them attended for services and schooling. The transition from a white ethnic enclave to a gay neighborhood started to happen around the 1950s.

Some historians believe San Francisco got its first reputation of being a gay tolerant city because of the gold rush. The gold rush brought in many young, single men so it is believed that during this time there was a sizable gay community here ("History of the Castro/Upper Market," 2014). It wasn't until the 1950s, however, that gay men congregated in one neighborhood in the city. Before The Castro became a hub of gay culture in San Francisco, there were scattered gay spaces throughout the City. While San Francisco may have been known as tolerant for its time, it was still not safe to be openly homosexual. Many residents wouldn't have wanted to form a

neighborhood because they would be more visible, and that visibility could mean losing their job and being ostracized from friends and family.

The civil rights movements in the 1960s and the abundance of cheap housing found in The Castro were the catalysts for the creation of San Francisco's gay neighborhood. The Victorian houses made by the working-class Scandinavians and Irish were cheap compared to newer housing in San Francisco at the time, so many gay men bought those older homes and began to renovate them ("History of The Castro District," n.d.). Bars catering to the queer community began to open along Castro and Market Street. Soon a diverse set of businesses began to open in the neighborhood, making it a fully functioning, livable gay community. For example, Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official of a large city in the U.S., owned a camera shop in the neighborhood before getting involved in activism and politics.

During the AIDS crisis, the social and community infrastructure established within The Castro helped mobilize activists. Newspapers, bars, and other social spaces became important tools in the fight. New services and spaces were needed to take care of community members who contracted HIV, promoting activists to lobby for the San Francisco General Hospital to establish a dedicated clinic to treat AIDS patients. That fight paid off and a clinic was formed in 1983 ("History of the Castro/Upper Market," 2014). Only a few years later, a group of San Franciscans mobilized to create the AIDS memorial in Golden Gate Park, which became a National Landmark in 1991 ("History | Timeline," n.d.). One of the most recent examples of physical community building in San Francisco is the SF LGBT Community Center, which opened in 2002 after nearly a decade of planning and fundraising ("History of the Castro/Upper Market," 2014).

Gay spaces in New York City followed a similar trajectory as in San Francisco. Some of the first gay spaces were at bars that welcomed a gay clientele. New York City had gay venues as early as the late 18th century, but they were frequently raided by the police or forced to shut down. Due to liquor laws that made it illegal for businesses to sell alcohol to homosexuals, many of the bars that survived were run by the mafia (Holland, n.d.). As white flight made its impact on the neighborhoods of the City, gay people of all races moved to Greenwich Village where rents had become affordable ("NYC pride," 2017). Like in San Francisco, soon after the gay community began to form a neighborhood identity, institutions and services were established to meet the diverse needs of their community.

New York City was one of the epicenters of the AIDS crisis and that had a large impact on the space production of the gay community. To handle the large number of people who needed treatment, the St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center, one of the first hospitals to take in HIV and AIDS patients, housed the largest AIDS ward on the east coast ("LGBT History in All Corners of the Village," 2017). In addition to medical care, people in the community could access support and services at New York City's LGBT Community Center that opened its doors in 1983, two years into the AIDS crisis.

Some gay spaces are now being recognized for their historic value. The Stonewall Inn, for example, is a bar that following a police raid in June 1969 sparked a riot that has since been considered the starting point of the modern gay political and social rights movement. Recognizing the importance of the Stonewall Inn to U.S. and global gay history, President Obama designated the building as a national landmark in 2016 ("Stonewall riots | United States history | Britannica.com," n.d.).

Chicago had a similar pattern and progression of gay spaces as seen in San Francisco and New York City. The early spaces were sporadic and underground, followed by a gathering of bars and clustering of home ownership starting in the 60s, leading to established social services, followed by the memorialization of queer spaces and lives. Like New York, Chicago has several historic venues that pre-date the modern queer movement. Chicago's gay serving bars and clubs were, like other queer bars across the country at the time, often run by the mafia. The mafia's involvement in queer spaces diminished as laws regarding the legality of being gay began to change (Nianias, 2015).

In the 1960s, the Lakeview neighborhood was more industrial than it is today, housing taxi and bus garages and associated services (Rodriguez, 2018). The low investment in the neighborhood meant that it was affordable to marginalized communities such as people of color, largely Hispanics, and the gay community. Gay people began to cluster in the neighborhood and created a sense of permanence through home and store ownership.

As gay rights movements grew, leaders and activists sought to use symbolism to elevate the visibility of the communities. By the time the rainbow flag was introduced in 1978, gay neighborhoods such as Boystown, The Castro, and Greenwich Village were well established ("How Did the Rainbow Flag Become a Symbol of LGBT Pride? | Britannica.com," n.d.). The gay community had created spaces of influence and power in those limited spaces and sought to expand that power into city, state, and national politics and culture. Several symbols and icons for the gay community existed before the rainbow flag was created. Some of those symbols include the Lambda, the Greek lowercase letter for L, which was chosen as the symbol of the gay movement by the International Gay Rights Conference in 1974. There were also other symbols that existed that were more sexual orientation- or gender-specific. For example, the labrys, a

two-sided ax, was used to symbolize both feminism and lesbians (“ALGBTICAL,” n.d.). While all these symbols hold their own importance, the rainbow flag has become the most recognizable and widely adopted symbol of the gay community.

Embodying the power struggles of previous revolutions, the designer of the rainbow pride flag, Gilbert Baker, wanted to create a symbol that would represent a queer nation. He took inspiration from the red and white stripes on the U.S. flag and of the stripes found on the French flag. Baker said in an interview with Huffington Post, “I thought of the vertical red, white, and blue tricolor from the French Revolution and how both flags owed their beginnings to a riot, a rebellion, or revolution. I thought a gay nation should have a flag too, to proclaim its own idea of power” (“The History And Meaning Of The Rainbow Pride Flag | HuffPost,” n.d.).

Another symbol tied to the gay community is the pink triangle, used by Nazi Germany to identify homosexuals in concentration camps (Fig. 4). The symbol became inseparable from the AIDS epidemic when a group of six gay men in New York City designed a poster to commemorate the sheer number of friends and loved ones they had lost to AIDS and draw attention to the Reagan administration's slow action to address the crisis. The poster they created included an inverted pink triangle and the words “Silence = Death” on a black background (“The Silence=Death Poster,” n.d.). Within a year of being plastered around New York City, the poster was adopted by ACT UP, an AIDS activist group which propelled its use and recognition to this day (“ACT UP new york,” n.d.).

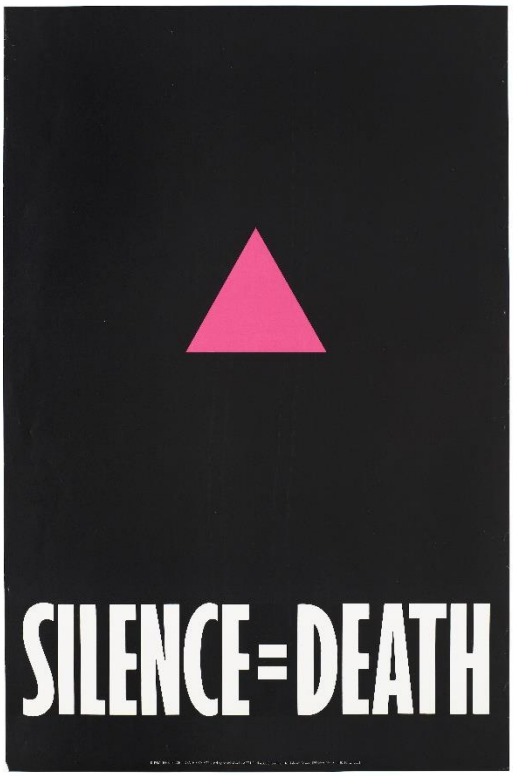

Figure 4: Silence = Death Poster. Source: Wikipedia, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silence%3DDeath_Project

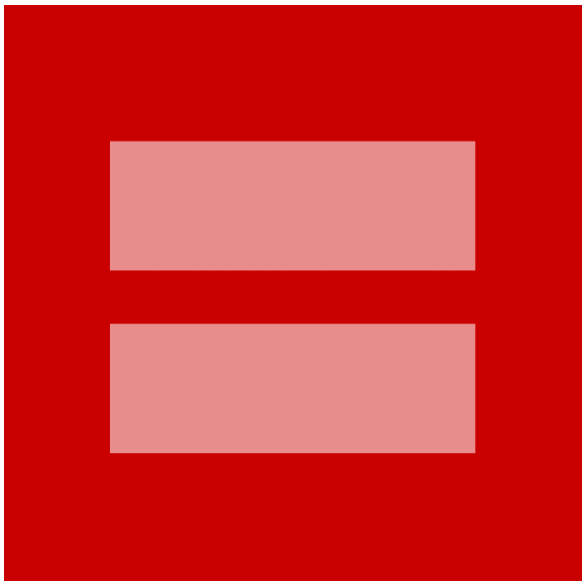

Figure 5: Human Rights Campaign marriage equality icon. Source: Wikimedia, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hrc_logo_red.svg

public domain. Backer never trademarked the flag and was happy to see it widely used and modified ("The History And Meaning Of The Rainbow Pride Flag | HuffPost," n.d.). The six creators of the silence=death poster also never sought ownership over the design and participated in promoting its use as part of ACT UP's official campaign ("How Six NYC Activists Changed History With 'Silence = Death,'" n.d.). Both the flag and the poster were designed by activists who saw their symbols as a way of bringing visibility to the gay community and the issues facing it, rather than as a vehicle for personal recognition.

A more recent example of gay iconography is the Human Rights Campaign's equal sign icon (Fig. 5). The icon was created in 1995 and was made to represent the values of the non-profit, which was seeking gay equality (Campaign, n.d.-a). The equal sign is yellow on a blue background, but the symbol gained more widespread recognition when it was modified to two shades of red to represent love in response to the Supreme Court's review on the legality of same-sex marriages. The Human Rights Campaign asked people to change their Facebook profile pictures to the new red symbol to show their support for marriage equality. The icon went viral and is now a commonly recognized gay symbol (Campaign, n.d.-a). Another example of how gay symbology has moved into the virtual world is the social media NoH8 campaign. The NoH8 campaign was made to bring attention to California's Proposition 8 which sought to repeal marriage equality in the state. In a now iconic form of protest, gay people and their allies would participate in photo shoots with their mouths duct taped with the letters "NoH8" written on it ("About | NOH8 Campaign," n.d.). While both the HRC icon and the NoH8 photos can be found on stickers, pins, and billboards, these new movements also show how the gay community has participated in the virtual space creation of online platforms.

Gay people did not start openly occupying public spaces with other people in their community until the 1960s. One of the earliest examples of gay people openly gathering in public was outside of the White House in 1965. At the time it was only 10 people who joined the protest showing their dissatisfaction with how the federal government was treating homosexuals ("What It Was Like at the First Gay Rights Demonstration Outside White House 50 Years Ago - ABC News," n.d.). Four years later in New York City, Stonewall Inn would be raided by police, but instead of fleeing the scene or being arrested without protest, patrons and onlookers fought back. The gays and trans people who were not arrested at or near Stonewall Inn on June 28th, 1969 stood up against police raids by rioting on and off for five days ("Stonewall riots | United States history | Britannica.com," n.d.). Civil unrest had been happening at various scales across the United States, but it was these riots that caught the imagination of the gay community and launched the modern gay rights movement. From the 1960s to today, the size and frequency of gay occupied public spaces has grown exponentially across the United States and the world.

In 1970, marches marking the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots were held in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (Nast, n.d.). These four marches were the beginnings of what would become Pride Parades. At first the marches had a more political edge. A few thousand people attended the first New York City march, many of whom carried political signs protesting the treatment of gay people. Only the Los Angeles march received permits from the city for the first year. The marches went by a few names until they all started to be called Pride in the 1970's. It was named after a gay rights organization at the time called Personal Rights in Defense and Education ("Pride's raucous parades began as suit-and-tie protests called the 'Annual Reminder,'" n.d.). Each Pride parade event will take on different meanings reflecting the political and social events of the place and time. Many young gay people in

America now see Pride parades as a chance to party and celebrate their identity. This is not in opposition to what started the events, but it is the product of political and cultural progress. Some argue that Pride parades have become nothing more than another excuse for Americans to drink and is joining the likes of Cinco de Mayo or St. Patrick's Day (Nast, n.d.). They worry that the parades may be losing their focus on the gay community.

Several Pride parades around the world have now exceeded 1 million attendees. Sao Paulo currently holds the record for having 5 million people attend their pride celebrations in 2017 ("The World's Biggest Pride Parades," n.d.). Regardless of how many non-gay people start attending these events, Pride parades represent an amazing story of how a globally marginalized group of people have made immense political and cultural strides in last 50 years. While there are still many places hostile to gay people and many issues that are yet to be resolved even in the U.S., the space gay culture now occupies around the world would have been hard to imagine during the first marches in 1970.

Inspired by the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom led by African Americans seeking civil liberties in 1963, two National Marches on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights have also occupied the National Mall in the District of Columbia (Amanda Goad - ACLU, 2013). The first march held in 1979, ten years after the Stonewall Riots, had at least 75,000 attendees. This march was organized to demand federal changes to laws that discriminated against gay relationships, threatened the employment of gay people, and discriminated against gay parenthood. When the second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was held in 1987, roughly half a million people participated (Campaign, n.d.-b). It was during this march that the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a collective art piece representing those lost to AIDS, was first displayed in D.C. (Lateef, n.d.). It was also thanks to the second march that there is now a

national coming out day. After the march, a group of activists gathered to create a day that celebrated gay and lesbian visibility. The date, October 11th, commemorates the second march that was also held that day (Campaign, n.d.-b).

The formation of gay neighborhoods, the creation of gay iconography, and the growth of openly gay gatherings in public space are all intricately linked to one another. They have all evolved together as the gay rights movement has progressed over time. Before the 1960s, gatherings were held in private, bar signage was discreet, and the buildings were often hidden away without windows. Symbols and phrases were not designed to proudly display one's identity but as code to meet likeminded people, while hiding one's identity from people outside the community as much as possible. The opportunities gay people had to both be openly gay and have a successful and happy life were basically nonexistent. When gay people began to form neighborhood communities and began to publicly protest discrimination, space creation and iconography changed in response to rising demands for equality in society but also as a reflection of gains made by the community.

It's also important to note that outside of America, independent gay movements are taking place and beyond that, compounding factors of discrimination affect people's lives, including race, gender, and socio-economic biases. All people can be involved in space production even when they don't have the backing of the government, cultural institutions, or businesses to do so. People who are part of disenfranchised groups, like people of color or gay people, have learned how to be creative in creating spaces for themselves despite discrimination, exclusion, and persecution. Even when their existence has been criminalized by the state, minority groups find ways to gather and occupy space within their cities.

In Rio de Janeiro, black gays are making opportunities for themselves and creating spaces where it is otherwise not found. Rio de Janeiro is a racially divided city with a history of slavery and a culture that is still heavily influenced by colonial imposed customs and laws that favor whiteness while criminalizing and sexualizing persons of color. Black residents of Rio are disproportionally poor, illiterate, and subjected to higher rates of incarceration (Oliver, 2018, p. 58). All these issues are compounded when a black person is also gay. Rio brands itself as a multicultural gay haven but does so at the expense of its black residents. Official city branding for the gay nightlife focuses on attracting white cis-males who are predominately shown in the advertising. For example, White men will be shown attending a bar where black music is being played but there may only be one Black person in the ad (Oliver, 2018, p. 63). In this way, the City is advertising Black people in Rio as a commodity to be experienced by White visitors. Since the officially promoted gay spaces in Rio are created for White cis-gendered gay men, the Black gay men and the Black non-binary people have created their own spaces in the city. Black gay people in Rio have been resourceful in place making by using spaces such as highway underpasses and alleyways (Oliver, 2018, p. 70).

There are parallels in the struggles facing gays in Rio and in Chicago. The early bar owners in Chicago and their patrons were breaking the law by gathering. They fought against the heteronormative culture, policies, and laws that kept them from socializing, spreading information, or integrating themselves into politics. Also, like Rio, Chicago has struggled to fully reconcile its raciest history. The scars of old polices still negatively affect the lives of Black Chicagoans, even as the progressive message of being inclusive of the gay community prevails. Questions about who benefits from modern gay liberation moments and who Boystown was designed to serve came up repeatedly in interviews. Similar concerns arose regarding the motives

of the City of Chicago in promoting Boystown, a predominately White gay space, while not investing in or acknowledging black gay spaces in the city.

In writing this essay, if I attempted to be race neutral, I would in fact be accepting the status quo of race dynamics as normal and acceptable. That would be a place of comfort for me as a White cis-male who feels welcomed and represented in a place like Boystown. It would be easy to rest in that privilege and pretend that not talking about race and gender is somehow neutral. It would be hypocritical to advocate that space creation is shaped by power dynamics and then to only focus on one aspect of a person or community when multiple factors contribute to a person's ability to participate in space creation. Having said that, I approached this essay with a focus on Boystown so the conversations on gender, race, and the history of Chicago will be weaved into the narrative as an element of space production as it relates to that neighborhood. I recognize that due to limited time this essay may at times rely on resources that favor a White cis gay male perspective of space creation in Boystown, greater Chicago, and the United States. Efforts were made to interview a variety of people with varying professional, racial, and gender perspectives.

The next chapter will explore in more depth how space creation in Chicago holds a parallel trajectory with the equality and power demanded by and granted to the gay community. Evidence will be drawn from the historical and contemporary accounts of leaders in the Chicago gay community. Interviews with business owners, non-profit leaders, and government staff are enlightening to what will sustain gay spaces like Boystown and keep them relevant in the future.

Chapter 4: The Evolution of Boystown's Gay Space Creation

Looking back from the mid-to-late 20th century, this chapter will explore how the gay community in Chicago created social and political spaces even while they were not provided or granted to them. The gay community in Chicago was given no institutional support in those early days of the modern gay movement. Gays were required to hide their identities and were criminalized for having sex with people of the same sex, and were criminalized for wearing clothing that was deemed inappropriate for their gender. This meant that gays had to be creative and vigilant in their production of space.

This chapter will explore the history of modern American gay culture from the perspective of space production in visual, physical, and organization spheres of influence. These three categories were inspired by Setha Low's approach to understanding public space. While observing and recording the arthrological characteristics of plazas, Low looked at things like use and programming, the physical dimension of activities, and the interactions among users (Low, 1996, p. 116). Thinking about how I might categorize the space elements of gay neighborhoods, I came up with three categories: visual space creation, physical space creation, and organizational space creation.

Looking first at visual space creation, I will highlight how the Chicago gay community used images, art, and icons to represent their community and claim a space as their own. I'll explore how symbols progressed from coded visual clues, to the out and proud visual space creation that we see today. I'll be looking at how each generation pushed the envelope in a way that made sense within the current political and cultural climate, and how each of those moves led to louder and more prominent space creation.

Like visual space creation, the story of physical space creation in Chicago is one that started in low-key, small, and at times hidden spaces that later grew into overstated, large, and

integrated physical spaces. Again, like visual space creation, you can see how each generation approached physical space creation within the constraints of their time. A common theme is persistence and pushing the envelope to serve and reach as many in the community as was possible. Safety, security, and survival have shaped which spaces have been created and how they have taken shape.

Lastly, I will look at how organizations have been created to meet the needs of the gay community and how city institutions have integrated gay people and agendas in Chicago. At first, many of the organizations created by gay people in Chicago were insular or sought to find ways to fit in with the heteronormative society. The civil rights movement created new tensions with that narrative and then the AIDS crisis reshaped the organizational patterns of gays in Chicago and across the U.S. As more people came out of the closet, new social organizations began to form in sport, arts, and politics. It was also during this time that many racial minority groups started to organize to ensure their needs and voices were addressed alongside their white counterparts. Politicians also began to partner with gays and eventually out gay people began to run and hold political seats in Chicago and Illinois.

VISUAL SPACE

One of the first gay bars to open in what is now known as Boystown was Sidetrack. Sidetrack was opened by Arthur Johnston and his partner Jose "Pepe" Peña (wbez, n.d.). When the bar first opened, it offered a small indoor space with crates as furniture. There was no outdoor patio and there were no windows like there are today. Gay bar storefronts were reminiscent of speakeasies in the Prohibition era. It was common at the time to not intentionally market a space as gay in a public way that might attract harassment from bystanders and the police. Gay bars were intentionally designed to create barriers between their clients and the

outside world. When Sidetrack opened it was not safe to be openly gay. Arthur has said that in the early days of his bar he would ask his visitors to travel home in pairs because he worried what would happen to them if they traveled home alone (wbez, n.d.). It was not uncommon for people who were believed to be gay to be beaten or even killed. In addition, the barriers and ambiguity were also designed to protect the social standing of those who entered. Many people were forced to be closeted in order to keep their jobs and their family ties. Sidetrack added its first small window and small sign 12 years after opening in 1994. It wouldn't be until 1999 that a logo and an open courtyard and glass front would be added ("ABOUT," n.d.). Walking down Halsted Street in 2018, I saw multiple gay bars and restaurants with floor-to-ceiling windows, large outdoor patios, and open-air walls or entrances (Fig. 6). Advertising for events are displayed prominently on fliers, posters, and banners facing the streets. There is also gay iconography, most commonly rainbow flags and colors, displayed on nearly every store front.

Figure 6: Outdoor seating along Halsted Street. Source: Neal O'Bryan, available at https://www.timeout.com/chicago/boystown

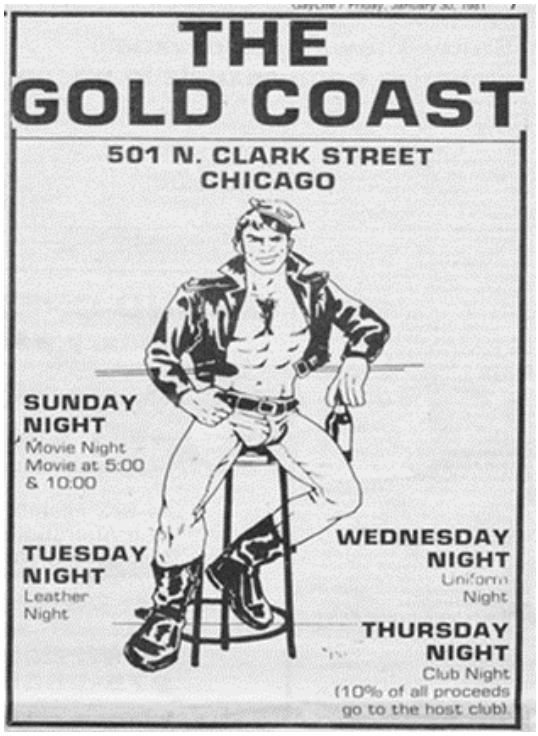

Figure 7: 1981 Gold Coast flier. Source: Chicago Now blog, available at http://www.chicagonow.com/blogs/bitter_old_queen/2011/01/chicago-gay-bars-past-and-present-part-14.html

The changes in storefronts and advertising along Halstead are signs of a progressively open and proud culture. The gays of Chicago fought hard to be recognized by their governments and to be treated equally by the law. The changes in the streetscape are a product of their fight.

Icons and logos in Boystown have also evolved to reflect the status of gay people in the city and the ideals of the movement. Before the proliferation of icons like the pink triangle or the rainbow, bars relied on imagery to represent their clientele. Gold Coast, which opened in 1958, is credited as the first leather bar in the world ("Chicago Gay History," n.d.). Gold Coast's advertising used Tom of Finland style illustrations of half-naked muscular men in tight clothing (Fig. 7). While some bars still intentionally cater to a gender, tribe, or fetish, more gay bars today attempt to be neutral or inclusive in their advertising. It is more common today to see women and people of color in advertisements of bars, even if their clientele is still predominantly white cis

males (Meadows, 2018). New and old power dynamics are being foregrounded and debated within Boystown. While previous moments saw gay and lesbian rights as something independent from bi and trans rights, other marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community are now asking where they fit in to the neighborhood. Now that gays and lesbians, particularly white gay men, are more widely accepted and represented in Boystown and the City, current internal fights for power and space creation stem from people of color, trans, and non-binary people.

Advertising for gay spaces and services started by word of mouth and print media passed along by friends. When gay sex and gender nonconforming clothing was illegal, it would not have been possible to advertise a gay business using traditional outlets. Now advertising gay bars and businesses has become a city affair. For example, the Northalsted Business Alliance founded in 1980, supports gay owned businesses and otherwise as the local merchant association ("The Alliance – Northalsted Business Alliance," n.d.). Even beyond the neighborhood, the citywide tourism agency, Choose Chicago, also advertises Boystown as a gay destination neighborhood ("Boystown | Chicago Neighborhoods | Choose Chicago," n.d.).

To disseminate information in the early days of the modern gay movement, gay people created their own print media and distributed it in their bars. In Chicago, the Windy City Times was created in 1985 to help document the lives and experiences of those who were gay ("Gay Lesbian Bisexual Trans News - aboutus - Windy City Media Group," n.d.). The Windy City times covers local issues, national issues, and regional events, and political commentary that is relevant to the gay community.

The first gay news media published in the US was a 1920's newsletter in Illinois (Baim, 2012, p. 438). Since then, gay published news media has played an important role in memorializing gay history and providing an insider's narrative to what has otherwise too

frequently been silent or out of touch mainstream media. Early news articles about gay people that didn't come from gay sources often villainized gay people, outed them, or stigmatized people with HIV, if they were covered at all (Baim, 2012, p. 433). Before the momentum of the civil rights movements in the 1960s, most gay media was subversive. For example, several male physique magazines were published with the unstated intent of reaching a gay male subscriber (2012, p. 438).

Explicitly gay publications grew in the 1960s but really took off following the Stonewall Riots in 1969. Around the country, many short-lived publications were made in reaction to the riots but the 1970s saw a rise in sustainable gay media publications (Baim, 2012, p. 438). That growth continued into the 1980s and 1990s, partially driven by the demand for gay media during the HIV/AIDS crisis. The rise of internet outlets and blogs in the 2000s took its toll on gay media just as it did other forms of print media. Today, many gay people go to online sources to find news about issues relevant to their community (2012, p. 439).

Baim (2012) stresses that with fewer locally run gay media outlets, gay history and perspectives may be lost since local residents are often the best historians of the gay community. Traditional media sources will sometimes write articles about gay people or issues in their community, but their outsider's perspective leaves the reader with a glossed over history and a lack of nuanced perspective that a gay news outlet would offer (2012, p. 446).

Despite the social progress that has been made since the first Illinois gay newsletter in the 1920s, these in-group media outlets still play an important role in the gay community. Even today there are people who think that giving space to gay issues is wrong and will attempt to silence gay voices. At the beginning of 2019, a print shop in Chicago refused to print brochures for an LGBT charity organization ("Chicago printshop refuses to make brochure for LGBTQ

charity fundraiser / LGBTQ Nation," n.d.), showing that even today, the Chicago gay community must fight for equal media production with their straight counterparts.

The streetscape of Boystown is like no other gay neighborhood in the world. In 1997, rainbow pylons were installed along Halstead Street under the direction of then mayor Richard M. Daley. Mayor Daley wanted to show his support for the gay community, who had grown in economic and political importance, by advancing the streetscape project under his neighborhood revitalizing project called Neighborhoods Alive (wbez, n.d.). The pylon streetscape installation was managed and funded by the Chicago Department of Transportation with the guidance of the Northalsted Business Alliance (Applied Real Estate Analysis, 2018). The pylons represent the first time that a municipal government would officially recognize a gay neighborhood.

The pylons took on new meaning when Victor Salvo, long-time community activist and founder of The Legacy Project, approached the City to add plaques of influential gay people from history to the pylons. The City agreed and as of 2018 there have been 40 plaques added to the 20 pylons (Applied Real Estate Analysis, 2018). The plaques were installed to the pylons in a way that makes it appear as if they were intended to be there all along. A lot of thought and care went into how to install the plaques and which persons would be featured. The pylons serve as a visual welcome to Boystown and impress upon a visitor that they have entered a special space. The plaques add a humanistic element to the street, creating an outdoor museum memorializing gay heroes who are often not taught in school or whose sexual or gender identities are not discussed. In 2018, the process toward designating the pylons one of Chicago's historical landmarks began (Staff, n.d.). By adding historic landmark status, the City is showing it values the history of the gay community, demonstrating how far gay space creation has come to be canonized into the broader narrative of Chicago history.

PHYSICAL SPACE

Well before the civil rights movement and the fight against AIDS fueled activism, there were bars and businesses catering to the gay community in Chicago. As the City grew and real estate values went up, gay spaces were pushed further away from the center of the city (wbez, n.d.). The racial makeup of bars has frequently reflected the larger social realities of the city. While some bars in the early 20th century had both white and black clientele, most of the gay bars in the 20th century were racially segregated. Frequently, when black people attempted to enter a bar run by white people they would be harassed at the door and denied entry if they couldn't produce multiple forms of I.D. Meanwhile, many underaged white gays would find their way into the same bars without a problem. Today, the longest running gay bar in Chicago is an African American bar that has been open since 1965 (RedEye, n.d.). It is located on the south side of the city where in the past there have been other gay bars.

While there has been a history of bars catering to the gay community in Chicago for over 100 years, especially on the outskirts of the city, it wasn't until the early 1970s that a cluster of gay bars owned by gay people opened near each other (wbez, n.d.). Before that time, the bars were further apart and were often run by the mafia. It was also a new phenomenon for gays to choose to live in a neighborhood as open homosexuals. When Lakeview became Chicago's hub of gay life it was at a time when gays were demanding rights in a radical way. Before the civil rights movements, gays were not as well organized, and the number of openly gay people was small. In this way, it makes sense that Boystown would be memorialized as the official and historic gay neighborhood despite a long history of gay spaces gravitating into new neighborhoods.

Not only did the clustering of gay bars happen during the early 70s, but it was in Boystown that most of the pride parades have been held, it's where many people learned about

HIV/AIDS, and it was eventually where the gay community would be officially recognized by the municipal government through the installation of the rainbow pylons as part of Mayor Daley's Neighborhoods Alive initiative. Each of these events, further contributing to Boystown's standing as the gay center of Chicago.

As more gays moved to the neighborhood and sought to live open authentic lives, new businesses opened that catered to the varying needs and interests of gay people. While the bars continued to hold an important role in the neighborhood's development, bookstores, cafes, and restaurants also opened to cater to the gay community. The addition of these spaces further imprinted the influence of power held by gay people in the neighborhood.

In Baim's *Out and Proud in Chicago* (2008) she discusses spaces in Chicago that functioned as community centers for gays and lesbians as early as 1961. Several of the earliest community centers were founded by lesbian groups including Daughters of Bilitis and the Chicago Lesbian Liberation group. The earliest centers were spaces where likeminded people could comfortably gather and discuss issues important to their lives and communities (2008, p. 100). With each new community center that was established in Chicago, more services would be added.

Chicago Gay Alliance announced the opening of their own community center in 1971. The center provided a variety of services include potlucks, libraries, meeting rooms, and a help line. The center closed in two years due to funding problems, a common challenge for the early centers who ran almost entirely on volunteer staff and lacked the gay fundraising infrastructure that exists today. Not long after Chicago Gay Alliance's center closed, the Beckman House opened in 1974 with the financial support of a few bars and personal financing by Barbara

Beckman. A legacy of the Beckman House is its helpline which still exists today, run by Center on Halsted (Baim, 2008, p. 101).

Center on Halsted, Chicago's current LGBT community center, now takes up almost an entire city block after its redesigned building opened in 2007 (Baim, 2008, p. 103). The new building has community spaces for any occasion, including a cafeteria-styled open floor space on the first floor that connects with the Whole Foods. I used this first floor space many times during my visit to Chicago. I held an interview in that first-floor public space and I also went there between interviews to charge my phone and work. While I was there, I saw people from all walks of life utilizing the open space. The building also includes a gymnasium, a performance theater, several meeting rooms, a conference lobby for events, and an outdoor patio.

The building footprint of Center on Halsted grew even more in 2014, when the adjacent historic police building was converting to affordable housing for gay seniors (Miller, n.d.). Apart from the Whole Foods, the entire block is now part of Center on Halsted and therefore directly serving the gay community. The senior housing is the first of its kind in Chicago and is serving a crucial service for older gays, who are too often forced back into the closet in old age to avoid discrimination (Miller, n.d.). Many elder community centers, like hospitals, have ties to a Christian organization which at times puts gay seniors at risk of not finding safe and affirming housing ("When LGBT Elders Have No Place to Call Home," 2018). If the only affordable housing option in their community is Christian affiliated and they wish to stay near family and friends, then some gays have chosen to go back into the closet at old age. Not only is this emotionally distressing and dehumanizing, it puts seniors at risk of not getting the health care they need. There is also the added issue of having community who understands you. Even if a

gay senior finds acceptable housing, if no one else in the facility is gay then their time there could be isolating.

The use of the old police station as a new LGBT senior housing center is an encouraging illustration of the progress gays have made in the City of Chicago. It was not long ago that people in the community were detained in that very building for running gay bars or for being gay (Miller, n.d.). To now have the building be used to take care of gays in an age of vulnerability is beautiful. The location is also practical because it allows the seniors staying in the new housing to have easy access to the services provided at Center on Halsted.

The style of the new Center was impactful to those who grew up hiding their sexuality and feared violence or police harassment if they tried to meet others like themselves. Center on

Figure 8: Center on Halsted. Source: Wikimedia, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Center_on_Halstead,_Chicago,_IL.jpg

Halsted has large windows on every floor, in stark contrast to earlier gay spaces that were often without windows or even signs (Fig 8). Center on Halsted has become a symbol of a people who no longer must hide in their own city. Local philanthropist Michael Lepen recalled, "In the past, we would go to gay bars that had unmarked doors with darkened windows so the world could not see in and we would feel protected. Now we have an incredible glass building, highly visible to the street and the rest of the world. A place to feel welcome, feel safe, and still be part of the everyday world without hiding who we are and what we believe in" (Baim, 2008, p. 103).

Festivals and events are another way that gays impact the Lakeview neighborhood and the City of Chicago. Pride Parades in Chicago are among the best attended Pride parades in the world and attract visitors from around the state, country, and internationally ("The World's Biggest Pride Parades," n.d.). Chicago has a long Pride parade tradition. It was one of a handful of American cities that participated in the first marches in 1970, just one year after the Stonewall Riots in New York City. The first event was called a march because the event was more about protesting and remembrance of the struggle than pride in identity, although it was that too (Nast, n.d.). Several hundred people participated in the Chicago march in 1970 and the number has steadily grown ever since. That first event was held just north of downtown but in 1971 the event was moved to Boystown and from that year onward the event was organized as a parade (Baim, 2008, pp. 106–107).

The parade in Chicago and around the world is still a place to express political discontent and a place to celebrate identity, but over the years it has shifted toward celebration and integration (Fig. 9). As the parade grew in Chicago, a few anti-gay counter protests were organized in the 1980s (Baim, 2008, p. 106). Those were the years that attendance saw the most growth, sometimes doubling year to year, showing that gay people and their allies felt called to

Figure 9: 2018 Chicago Pride parade. Source: Wikimedia, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago_Gay_Pride_Parade_2018_a.jpg

participate in the parade as a way to stand up for their community. Gays recognized that the more space that was occupied, the louder the message would be. Eventually politicians started to participate in the parade and recognized the opportunity to show support and gain support from a sizable voter base (Baim, 2008, p. 107).

The original march in 1970 and the subsequent parades in Chicago have not only redefined gay space creation and occupation in the City of Chicago, but around the world. Activists and coordinators such as Richard Pfeiffer have made events like the Pride parade possible and have also shared their experiences to help shape the now global phenomenon of Pride parades. Pfeiffer was a spectator at the 1970 march and was inspired to be a participant and

organizer every year since (Pfeiffer, 2018). He has seen the march evolve and grow into an event that has attracted over 1 million attendees since 2016 ("The World's Biggest Pride Parades," n.d.), and the 2019 parade will likely hit record numbers as it is the 50th anniversary of the New York City Stonewall Riots. Pfeiffer has been involved in international committees to provide guidance to new pride celebrations around the world. His contributions are just one example of the many ways Chicago has trailblazed gay rights and shaped gay culture around the world.

ORGANIZATIONAL SPACE

Some of the earliest forms of organized gay socializing in Chicago was in the early 20th century at drag balls and clubs. During the speakeasy era, gays would gather to dance to live jazz music or perform in drag. By some accounts, there would be hundreds of people attending some of these events (Baim, 2008, p. 29). Gay culture in the 1920s and 30s in Chicago is known for its openness and liveliness. The drag balls and cabarets became so popular among gays during this time that some Chicago-based historians call those decades the "Pansy Craze" (Baim, 2008, p. 42).

That brief period of relative openness ended with an increase in police raids that continued all the way into the 1970s. New forms of social organizations that centered around political movements started forming in the mid-1950s. The Mattachine Society, a growing national homophile organization took root in the Midwest during the 50s. The Mattachine Society did a lot to address discriminatory laws and police brutality in Chicago, but their tactics are known for being conservative compared to later, post-Stonewall Riot national movements. John D'Emilio, Professor of women and gender studies at the University of Illinois, wrote in *Out and Proud* in Chicago that "In those days, even the activists couldn't say 'gay' or 'lesbian.' They came up with names like the Mattachine Society or the Daughters of Bilitis, and they called

themselves the “homophile movement” (Baim, 2008, p. 70). While organizational space creation in the 1950’s was conservative, by the mid-60’s, even before the Stonewall Riots, the Chicago Mattachine Society started using more aggressive and explicit language like “Gay Power” and “Lawless Police” (Baim, 2008, pp. 70–71). Chicago was ready for big change. While the gay community responded to national movements and saw increased momentum post-Stonewall, the homegrown organizing was the most important driver of the several historical firsts held by Chicago and the State of Illinois. Some of the biggest firsts include Illinois being the first state to remove its sodomy laws in 1961 and the City of Chicago being the first municipality in the world to officially recognize its gay neighborhood in 1997 (Baim, 2008, p. 198).

Chicago was one of a handful of cities that held a march in 1970 on the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York City. Community organizations grew rapidly during this time and Chicago saw an increase of bars, book stores, and social clubs. By 1974, there were around 60 gay bars in the City (Baim, 2008, p. 114). Some Chicago institutions that formed during the 70s have made a global cultural impression. One such example is the International Mr. Leather competition that started at Gold Coast, believed to be the first leather bar in the world (Baim, 2008, p. 128). 1n 1979, the first year of the competition, the contestants came in from a handful of states. Chicago was starting to make space not just for the gays in its own community but was also starting to demonstrate the potential of gay tourism. During the AIDS crisis, winners of the competition also used the platform to promote awareness and raise funds.

Following the Stonewall riots, gays in the Chicago theater scene were also inspired to come out and establish gay theaters. Gay male and lesbian troupes were formed in the 1970s, as were gender nonconforming troupes. So much progress in the arts has been made since then, that

Chicago theater critic Jonathan Abarbanel said "Chicago gay and lesbian artist and troupes scarcely need special theatrical identities today. Our theater artist and managers are integrated in every possible facet of Chicago's booming theater industry from producers to ushers, playwrights to prop masters, and academics to theater critics" (Baim, 2008, pp. 130–130). Other social organizations that began in the 70s include Chicago's first gay bands, choirs, and lesbian-feminist music festivals (Baim, 2008).

AIDS changed the political scene for the gay community. People were being forced out of the closet because of the disease and the general public had to reconcile that there were more gay people than they had assumed. Many new organizations were created to help fight AIDS, while some existing organizations were consumed by this new cause. Chicago already had a community of out and proud activists before AIDS, including organizations such as Chicago for Our Rights. Chicago for Our Rights would become a chapter of ACT UP to help fight against AIDS (Baim, 2008, p. 151). Other existing organizations that helped during the AIDS crisis were the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic (now Howard Brown Health Center) and Horizons (now Center on Halsted) (Baim, 2008, p. 146).

To combat the public's fear of contracting AIDS via casual contact with gay people, to help dispel the myth that gay people where only in certain areas of town and not in fact everywhere, and to pressure the passing of Chicago's Gay Rights bill, two Chicago bar owners started the Gay Dollars campaign in 1987. For the better part of a year, Marge Summit and Frank Kellas, respective owners of His 'n Hers and Gold Coast bars, led a campaign that encouraged gay people to stamp their money with the phrase "GAY $". The idea of the campaign was to force people to realize the amount of contact they had with gays and the influence gays held in the City. Summit said that 600 stamps were made for bars both in and out of state that wanted to

participate in the campaign. Summit and Kellas were told by the Northern District of Illinois Attorney General to cease and desist but they refused to stop until the Gay Rights Bill was passed. By the time the bill passed, Summit claimed that her inside sources told her that more than 17 million bills had been stamped (Baim, 2008, p. 161).

The fight against AIDS that led so many gay people to take political action also encouraged a new wave of openly gay people to seek political office. Openly gay men had attempted and failed to hold the office of alderman in the 44th Ward of Chicago since 1979. Grant Ford was the first openly gay man to run for the position but lost. The 44th Ward includes the parts of the Lakeview neighborhood that encompasses the Boystown area and Wrigley Field. In 1987 and 1991 Ron Sable also ran as an openly gay man for the alderman seat of the 44th Ward but he lost to Bernard Hansen by only a few votes (Baim, 2008, p. 146). It wouldn't be until 2003 that Thomas Tunney would be elected as Chicago's first openly gay alderman (Baim, 2008, p. 216). As of 2018, there were many more out gays and lesbians that were holding the seat of Alderman across the City. The first gay person successfully elected to statewide office in Illinois was Thomas R. Chiola, who was elected as judge to the Cook County Circuit Court in 1994. Just over two decades later, the Cook County Circuit Court would have over 12 openly gay and lesbian judges (Baim, 2008, p. 217). Chicago also elected its first openly gay mayor, Lori Lightfoot in April 2019 ("Lori Lightfoot elected Chicago mayor, will be 1st black woman and 1st openly gay person to hold post," n.d.).

Future Space

I asked each person I interviewed what they thought the future would hold for Boystown and gay neighborhoods at large. Among those interviewed were business owners, city officials,

journalist, and community activists. While some highlighted what was great about Boystown and how that will continue to be relevant in the future, others emphasized what must change. Some themes for what should continue were safe and welcoming community services (Lawson, 2018), helping minority business owners own their own property (Liberson, 2018), memorialization of historic people and places (Baim, 2018; Salvo, 2018), and a general openness towards those who feel excluded (Pfeiffer, 2018). The others who emphasized what needs to change, also recognized the successes and strengths of Boystown but stressed the need to expect more of institutions working with the community (Rodriguez, 2018), the need to be more welcoming to people of color and non-cisgender people (Meadows, 2018), and the need to support gay leaders and organizations creating services and safe spaces outside of Boystown (Hunt, 2018).

While everyone I interviewed has had positive memories, experiences, and hopes for Boystown, it did appear that the more associated someone was with city functions, the more likely the emphasis was on what should continue instead of pointing out what should change. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was the non-profit leaders who were more likely to point out inequities in the communities and more readily voiced wanting to see those addressed in the future.

The interviews also showed me the importance of individuals. It's been the work and influence of many key individuals who have made Boystown the iconic, safe space it is today. Beyond the wills of the City, economic forces, and the whims of an evolving culture, there have been key individuals, sometimes not well known, who have made things happen. Boystown has benefited from a city government that stopped fighting the gay community earlier than most. It has also benefited from several savvy business owners who have built off each other's success, and a politically engaged and social community.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I started my research wanting to answer the question of how cities are involved in minority neighborhood space creation. As a future planner, I wanted to know what cities have done to help neighborhoods like Boystown form. I chose to look at the Boystown neighborhood after learning about Mayor Richard M. Daley's involvement in selecting the neighborhood for his streetscape program, making Boystown the first municipally recognized gay neighborhood. What I discovered in my research however, is that moments with direct city involvement in Boystown's community development have been rare. The ideas, funding, and organization that formed Boystown came almost exclusively from the community, business owners, and inspired individuals. This is not to say the City's role is not important or influential. Gay space creation was taking place for decades before the formation of Boystown but never had the same level of permanence or impact, in part because of the homophobic laws and police brutality endured by the gay community. For the level of space occupation held by the gay community in Chicago today, a high level of cooperation with the City is necessary for the events and institutions to run efficiently at their current size. The City's role went from hostile, to brief moments of benevolence, to now a willing partner in Boystown's development.

By organizing gay space creation into three categories—visual, physical, and organizational—we are freed from the binary narrative that sees gay neighborhoods continuing as they are as good, and the disappearance of those gay neighborhoods as bad. It becomes easier to see how evolving gay neighborhoods could be a positive means to an increasingly open, connected, and respected community. On a trajectory toward greater visual, physical, and organizational influence and opportunity, the natural progression of gay space creation has moved from limited contained areas to increasingly expansive influence and occupation. Through this lens, the disappearance of gay neighborhoods as they once existed may be a

harbinger to a better and more prominent space. In this future, gay spaces would not be lost to straight spaces: they would instead be just as accessible and visible as straight spaces. It will be the future generations of gays with the cooperation of their governments that will determine whether gay space creation will focus solely on city-wide space creation, neighborhood scale space creation, or both.

In Amin Ghaziani's book, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (2016), he wrestles with how gay neighborhoods might exist in a future where more and more gay people just want to fit in and be "normal," and where more and more straight people are accepting or apathetic to gay rights (Ghaziani, 2016). As I did in my own research, Ghaziani examined gay history across the county, but used Chicago as a case study to consider what gay neighborhoods may look like in the future. From Ghaziani's perspective, the changes taking place in gay neighborhoods across the country are born out of the gay community's simultaneous desire to find community, while also blending in with the rest of society. He concludes that gay neighborhoods are not disappearing, just changing, and that while historic gay neighborhoods change, new ones are forming. These new neighborhoods would not replace old neighborhoods but instead create additional gay spaces, creating an "archipelago" effect in the urban form (2016, pp. 258–259).

Ghaziani helps us see how gay spaces exist because of the work and motivations of gay people. He helps show how gay culture has shaped the gay neighborhoods we have today and how an evolving gay culture will change the neighborhood spaces gays continue to create. According to Ghaziani, the future of gay neighborhoods ultimately rests on the desires of gay people (2016, p. 249). While I agree with Ghaziani's perceptive, I believe a greater emphasis should be placed on the role city governance plays in shaping a community, both in terms of the types of spaces the community are able to create and the ease with which it creates those spaces.

Through law enforcement, community engagement, zoning, code enforcement, and representative governance, cities become the gatekeepers to resources and thus determine the growth potential of its communities. The advocacy and determination of the gay rights community should not be overlooked, and change would not have come without the determination of generations of advocates making the needs of a community heard. However, how gay neighborhoods and spaces will look in the future will be determined not just by advocates and gay business leaders but also by what cities actively and passively allow to be built within their boundaries. By emphasizing a city's role as an active agent and gatekeeper in community development, we gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the progression of gay spaces and the direction it is likely to head.

We saw a switch in the City of Chicago's relationship with gay neighborhoods when Mayor Richard M. Daley chose Boystown as one of the cultural neighborhoods to benefit from the Neighborhoods Alive streetscape initiative. The gay community had started to become more politically and economically organized and the City reacted accordingly. Also, as the gay community fought and started to win legal battles for acceptance, it became advantageous for the City to no longer get in the way of gay space creation. From Zukin's perceptive, the City's motivations come from the desire to capitalize on a neighborhood that can be promoted as an asset to business elites and can be used as a beacon of their progressive values. By claiming a gay neighborhood and supporting its creation, the City of Chicago would be differentiating itself from the surrounding suburbs. Assuming the City of Chicago will continue to be motivated to differentiate itself from the suburbs and other cities to attract talent, it is likely the City will continue to preserve and bolster gay services in the City.

While Zukin's arguments are rational, it also feels dismissive to the hard work the gay community has put into having a voice in the City of Chicago. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation theory shows a different perspective on how a city can control the degree to which it allows different constituent groups to participate in the community development process. While Zukin emphasizes the active role cities play in shaping communities, Arnstein's ladder shows how cites can be the gatekeepers to community development. From the perspective of Arnstein's community engagement ladder, the change in gay neighborhoods came from cities' allowing the gay community to determine their own future. Arnstein's ladder has eight tiers that range from no public participation, to some public involvement with final say resting with the city, to full public control in the processes of planning and decision making ("Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation," n.d.). The evolution of the Boystown streetscape is a great example of the City of Chicago taking first a lead role and later a supportive role in Boystown's development as a gay or gay-branded space. In the early days of gays moving to Lakeview and setting up businesses, the city of Chicago would not have allowed any gays to legally (or at least without harassment) brand the neighborhood as gay. When the City decided to accept that Lakeview had become an enclave of gay culture, the City funded the design and construction of rainbow pylons that now adorn Halsted Street. The plans for the streetscape were presented by the City to the community and some feedback from the residents was considered in the final design, but ultimately the City intended to see the streetscape through to completion. Several years after the pylon creation, they were reimagined as vessels for an outdoor museum. Led and executed by members of the gay community, 40 plaques showcasing the talents and accomplishments of gay people from around the world and throughout history are now welded to the rainbow pylons. In building the pylons, the City made an active investment in the

development of gay space. And while it took a great deal of collaboration with the City to figure out how to make the plaques work, they are an example of the City taking a more passive role in allowing community led gay space creation.

By taking these theories into account, we realize that the future of Chicago's gay neighborhoods could be determined more by the gay community than at any other time in the history of the city. We also see that the City will not be a neutral player in the development of gay spaces. The City may let the gay community take the lead, but it will be motivated to support the projects and initiatives that elevate its status as a dynamic city. Zukin warns that as cites and businesses brand an area, they often actively attempt to make some residents, especially those who are wealthy, feel comfortable while making other residents, particularly those who are poor, feel unwelcome in those spaces. As gay neighborhoods are increasingly seen as a cultural value to cities, the gay community should be careful not to police out members of its own community. If gayborhoods (as Zukin's model would predict) were to be designed to benefit elites, they could become less welcoming to the homeless, the poor, and the disenfranchised. Gay neighborhoods could also become increasingly unwelcoming to those who are victims of other biases found throughout American society, including preferences toward masculinity and whiteness. Tensions currently exist within the Chicago gay community around how to make Boystown a more welcoming space for people of color, women, and gender non-conforming people.

The City of Chicago has proven to be a city interested in giving more voice to the gay community and pursuing occasional active community development. With that in mind, future gay space creation is likely to be larger in scale, breadth, and distribution than in the past. Gay communities must be aware of the motivations of cities in community development and use that

understanding to guide equitable growth that service the diverse needs of their community. More broadly, I believe planners in any city can see connections between the forms of space creation by the gay community in Chicago with that pursued by minority communities in their own city. If a minority community has yet to successfully create equivalent cultural or economic spaces, planners should consider whether this may be the result of city policies such as arrests and raids, redlining, disinvestment, or lack of cooperation. The dedication of visionary individuals and the support of a community was necessary for the development of Boystown, but those contributions were only sustainable because cities and institutions didn't get in their way, and at times, were willing to directly invest in the visions of those communities.

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